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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet outlines the various activities of project CHILD, an educational improvement program set up by the Charles County public school system in Maryland. It presents a three-fold program stressing Language Arts, Guidance, and Special Education. Community response and involvement with Project CHILD are mentioned, as well as future plans for the program. (JB)

ED 075348

Tomorrow is Today's Dream

When the Charles County Public Schools reopen in September 1972, they should be stronger because of two programs initiated during the 1971-72 school year. These two programs are funded under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended. Under the Title III Program, the Maryland State Department of Education is authorized to make grants to local educational agencies for innovative and exemplary programs which are designed to demonstrate ways of making a substantial contribution to the solution of critical educational problems.

In July 1970, the Maryland State Board of Education directed the staff of the State Department of Education to offer its assistance to the Superintendent of Schools of Charles County in developing Title III programs which would improve the public schools. Two Title III projects were developed and funded: Project CHILD and the Early Childhood Program. Since Project CHILD has been operating for a complete school year, this publication will be devoted entirely to it.

Improving public education in Charles County is the concern of all of us. Hopefully, this publication will serve as a progress report of one of our Title III efforts in Bel Alton School and LaPlata High School: *Project CHILD.*

Sincerely,

James A. Sensenbaugh

JAMES A. SENSENBAUGH
State Superintendent of Schools

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The title of this booklet comes from a quotation in *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran.

> *Yet the timelessness in you is aware of life's timelessness,*
> *And knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream . . . .*

It seemed an appropriate thought since the present reflects our past and the future depends on what we do today.

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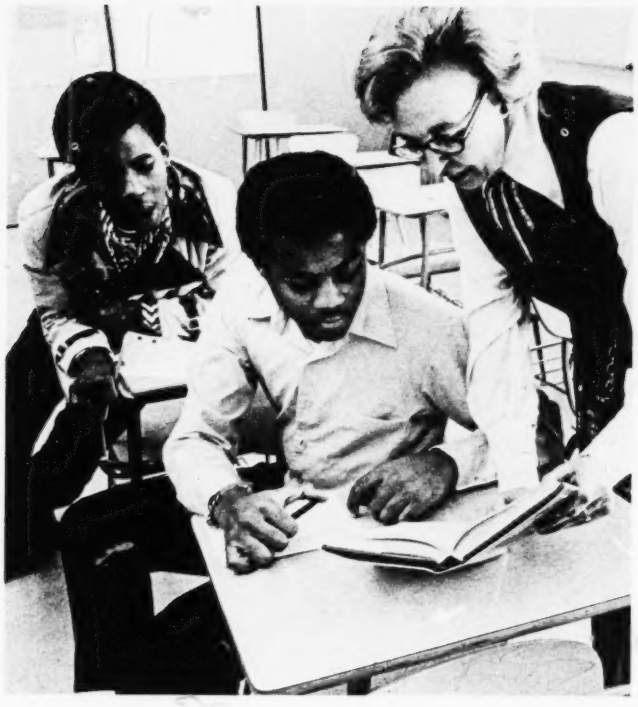


In the autumn of 1970, the Charles County Board of Education submitted a Title III project proposal to the Maryland State Department of Education. The proposal was approved for funding by the Maryland State Board of Education in December 1970. During the spring and summer of 1971, staff was hired and plans were made for the implementation of the proposal when school began. The original proposal had a long and rather erudite title so we decided to change the title to Project CHILD. This is really more appropriate since the focus of our efforts is the children in our schools.

When I submitted the Title III proposal, I included a letter which I believed indicated the educational philosophy of Charles County. I would like to share portions of that letter with you.

> *The mission of the schools is to teach children, no matter what their state of readiness. When traditional or conventional practices do not succeed, the school is responsible for finding other means of teaching effectively, and, if necessary, for changing its concepts and methods drastically in order to do so.*
>
> *It is our hope that in this project we will capture the spirit expressed so that we can demonstrate the methods for our schools to accomplish their mission successfully — that of teaching our children so that they can become happy, wholesome individuals who can create and live in a society which can fulfill their needs.*
>
> *It is also our desire that from the models created in this project the entire system will see the results which can be achieved and move to the more successful methods which have been demonstrated.*
>
> *. . . we have every confidence that when put into operation, this effort [of contributors] will make a significant contribution to the education of the children of Charles County.*

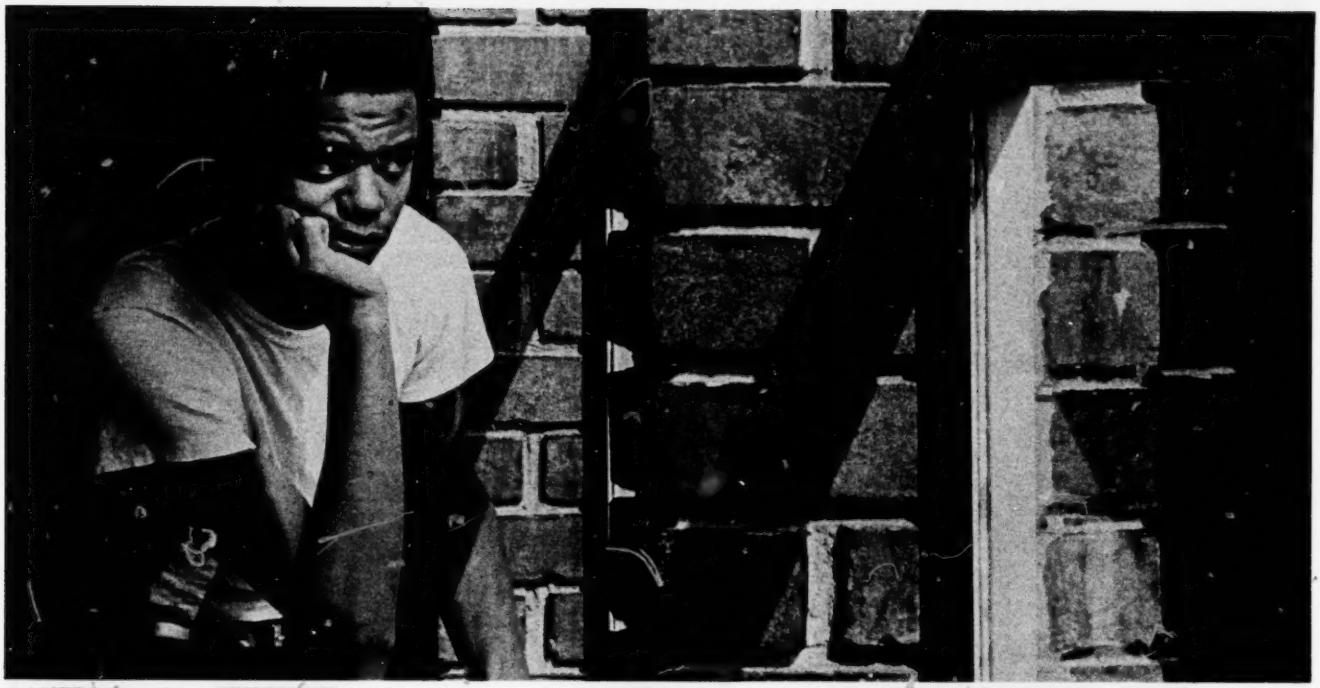
I hope that our staff's confidence in the project was sound. In a sense, this is a first report. Final evaluations will occur when federal funding terminates. Statistics will show such things as test scores, attendance, and dropout rates. If the statistics are positive, the citizens of Charles County will have to indicate their support of the successful components of the project.

We shall look forward to your reactions.

Sincerely,

Jesse L. Starkey

JESSE L. STARKEY
Charles County Superintendent of Schools

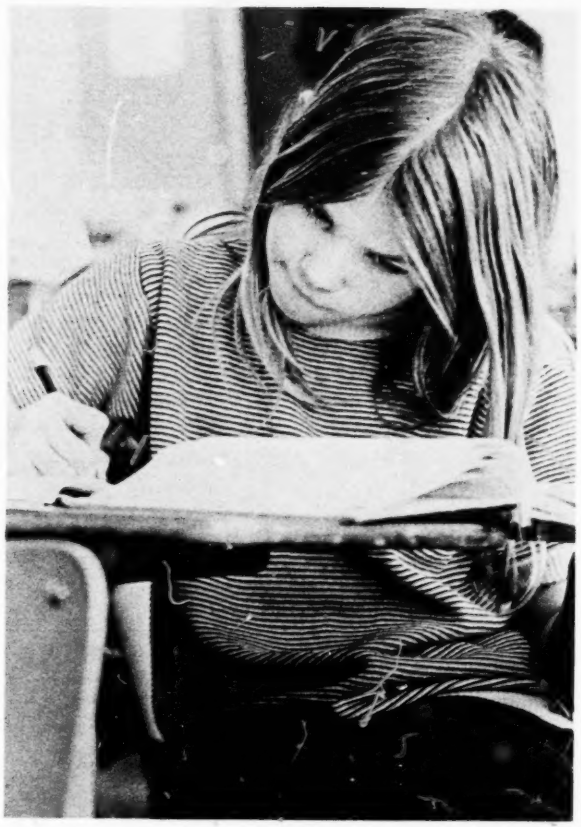


Question for Doubters

Why should you read this booklet?

You should read this booklet if any of the following answers apply to you:

- ☐ If you believe that Charles County children are entitled to a better education than they are now getting.
- ☐ If you believe that education is important and you want to become "involved."
- ☐ If you feel that some encouraging things are beginning to happen in the schools and you want to see these things continued.
- ☐ If you believe the community should have a "say" about the kinds of schools they want.
- ☐ If you really care about children.



Activities of Project CHILD

Project CHILD has three student-oriented components: Language Arts, Guidance, and Special Education.

Language Arts

Language Arts cuts across subject matter lines and exists in all areas of instruction. Efforts to improve skills and to offer enrichment in Language Arts are found in many places.

- ☐ Reading is the most important aspect of Language Arts, and concern for reading improvement is everywhere. Students at La Plata High School and Bel Alton School have been interviewed and diagnosed individually in order to determine their most appropriate placement. Proficiency tests have been given frequently to determine reading levels. Materials for instruction are selected on the basis of the students' reading level. Additional reading teachers provide for individual and small group instruction. Reading improvement is encouraged in ways that are sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle.
- ☐ Bel Alton School and La Plata High School have Language Arts Coordinators who coordinate programs both within the school and between the schools. Additionally, they work with the Director of Curriculum and Supervisory Services and the Supervisor of English to insure a coordination of efforts on a county-wide basis.
- ☐ In both Bel Alton School and La Plata High School, the Language Arts Resource Centers, with their informality and their variety of media for loan, are centers of activity for both students and teachers. Students find new materials and an additional staff member who can give them instructional direction. Large-print publications are available for students with newly identified vision problems. Teachers have a place to plan and to share ideas.
- ☐ Language Arts classes at La Plata High School have a sense of vitality. New materials encourage new activities. Ideas for discussion are not limited to books but come from films such as *Ulysses, Never Wave Goodbye, Fiddler on the Roof, To Sir with Love,* and *El Cid.* Ideas for composition come from trips to Williamsburg and Richmond. Qualified college-bound students can work in an independent study program. Classes other than Language Arts classes are showing effects of the program. For example, "How to Read Test Questions" was an exercise in some history classes. La Plata students improve their own Language Arts skills by tutoring children at the Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School. Thirty-four students tutor before school and during study halls. The activiity has a waiting list of students wishing to join the serious *but* enthusiastic endeavor.
- ☐ A Bel Alton Language Arts teacher devised a reward system for good citizenship and conduct. The winner went on a journey farther than he had ever travelled before — a shopping trip to a center several miles north of Bel Alton. He was thrilled by seeing a helicopter, radio towers, and an oriental shop — eating a submarine sandwich — and riding an escalator.
- ☐ A newsletter "Happiness Is . . ." is a joint venture of both Bel Alton School and La Plata High School. The Language Arts coordinators are responsible for the newsletter. The single-sheet mimeo features student art work, individual students' activities, and items that indicate school can be a happy place.

Guidance

A special aspect of the program is the "free" counselor at Bel Alton School and La Plata High School — a position created to bring together the home, school, and community. These counselors are convincing the parents and other community members that they are welcome in the schools and that the schools do care about their children.

Parents are no longer surprised to find a counselor at their front door who came because she was concerned about their child. While many parent contacts have been in the homes, others have taken place in stores, restaurants, and many places where chance meetings occur. Parents without transportation have been picked up at their homes and driven to the school for meetings. Other parents, such as those in the congregation of the Shiloh Methodist Church, found out about Project CHILD when the "free" counselor surprised the minister by requesting an opportunity to visit his church.

In addition to a "free" counselor in both schools, two additional counselors are provided at La Plata High School so that each grade level now has a counselor. An additional counselor at Bel Alton School makes it possible for a counselor to be assigned to both the elementary and the middle school.

Changes Related to Project CHILD

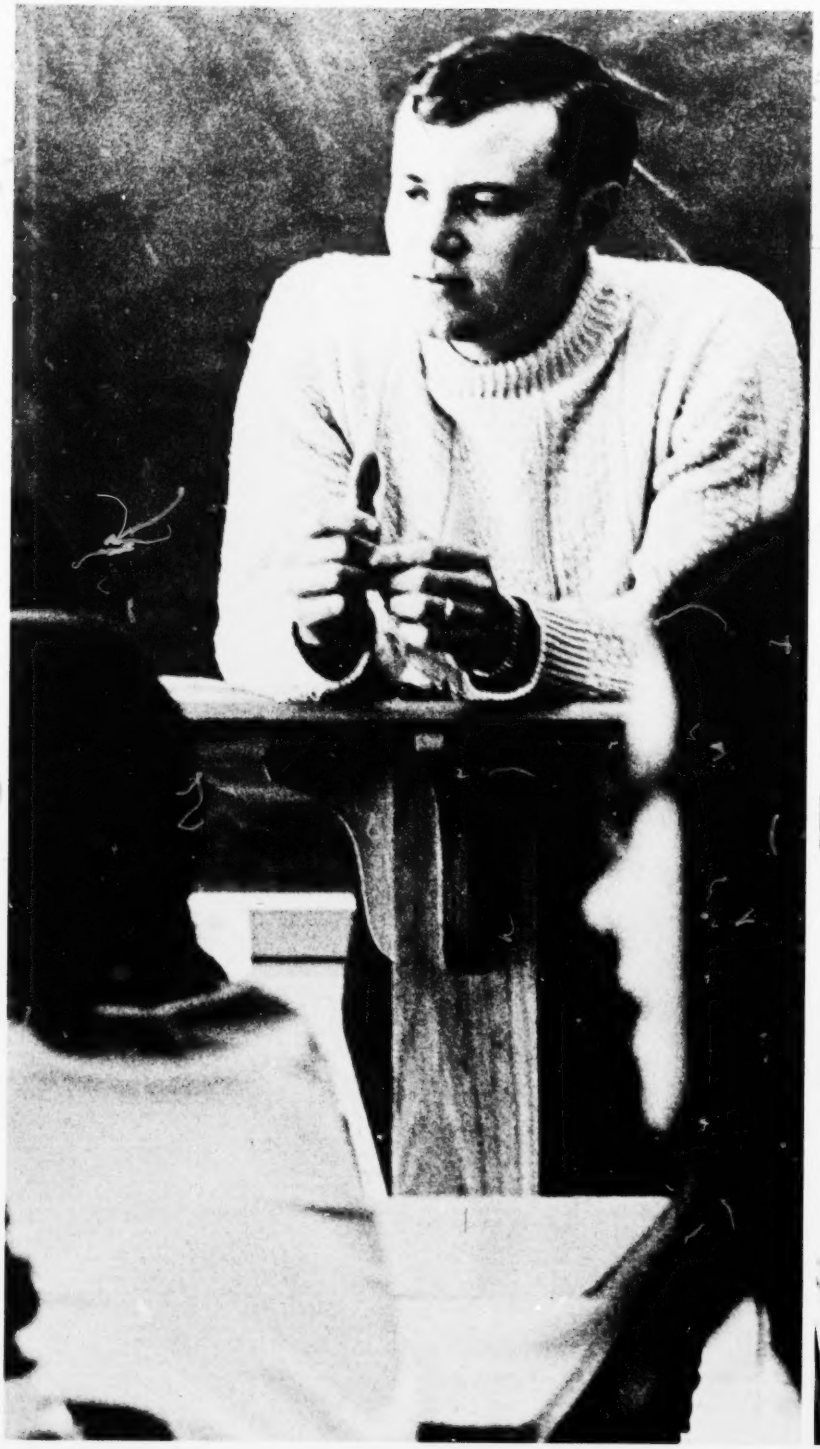
The presence of more parents in the schools is a tangible sign of growing interest and security there. The President of the La Plata Lion's Club, disgruntled with La Plata High School earlier this year, readily admits that changes are occurring. He works with the school's "free" counselor now to establish better rapport between school and parents, and he was partly responsible for planning the dinner meetings where parents and staff members meet to "rap" about problems.

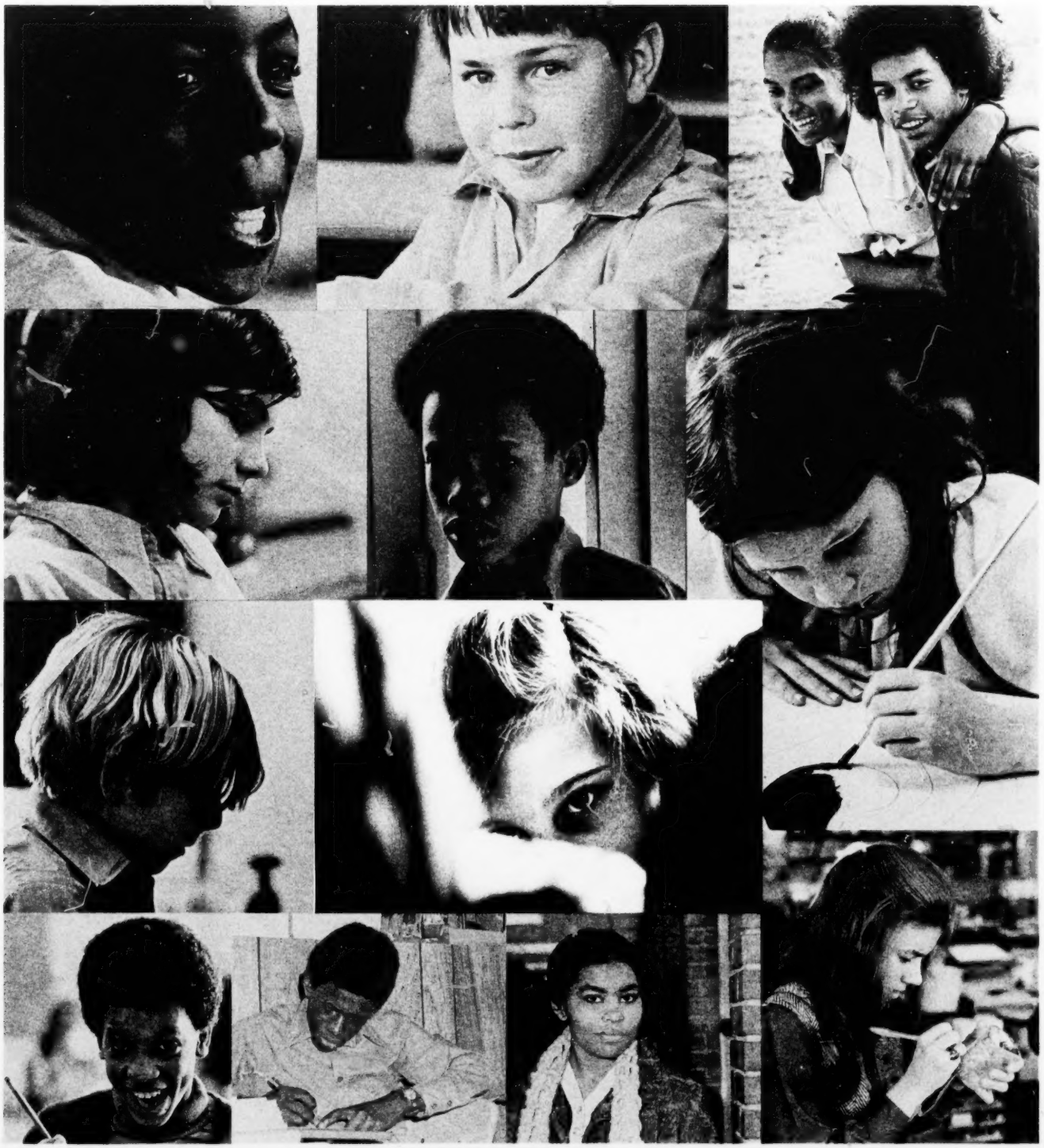
A mother of two Bel Alton students relates that her sons like the new reading program because "it is more of a challenge to them." Her opinion is similar to that of other parents polled who are happy to have their children's needs diagnosed and to have specific programs developed to help them achieve.

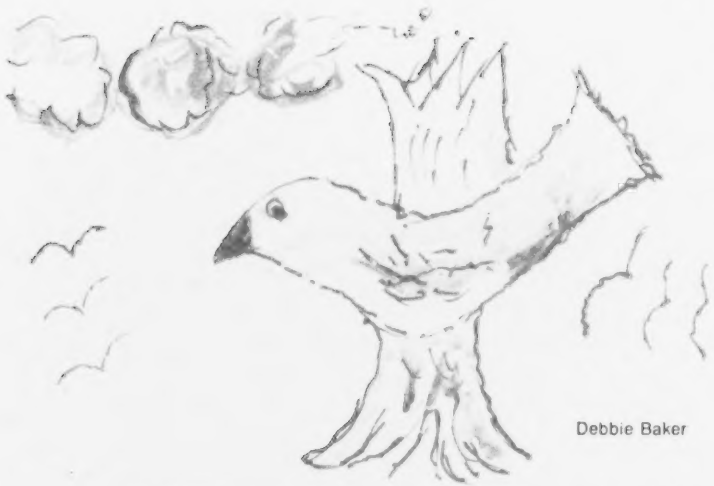
A mother of several students at La Plata High School was concerned over the progress of her son who had been a special education student for nine years. She credits the additional staff provided by Project CHILD and their concern about individual students with the discovery that her son's learning problem was a "sight reversal." During the past year, he has progressed three reading levels.

Although it is still too early for statistical evaluation of Project CHILD's success, staff members speak freely of the kinds of progress they notice.

- ☐ A La Plata High School social studies teacher believes that his students understand their material better, that they sometimes try to perform even beyond their abilities, that they are learning to aid other students who cannot do as well, and that they are more willing to volunteer for long-term projects.
- ☐ A Bel Alton counselor says that part of the students' change in attitude seems to be a feeling that they are really a part of the school program.
- ☐ Bel Alton's principal reports that though he has not kept statistics to support his personal observations, he believes strongly that there have been fewer discipline referrals from the Language Arts classes than from others. He interprets this to be the students' security in a program geared to their level of achievement.
- ☐ A Language Arts coordinator notes that placement of students on instructional levels has caused teachers to teach *individuals* by small group instruction, prescription, and contract.
- ☐ The chairman of La Plata's English Department observes that the awareness of problem readers in the classroom has also resulted in the teachers giving more individual attention to all of their other students.
- ☐ A staff member at Bel Alton School finds a greater interest taken by students in completing requirements for each reading level since the responsibility to learn is more visibly their own. She also says that some children are so happy in their new Language Arts classes that they have already begun to worry about whether the high school will continue the program, giving them hope "up there."







Debbie Baker

Plans for Tomorrow

The following ideas are the responses of a sampling of teachers and community members. They would like to see the successful elements of Project CHILD continued. They would also like to add some suggestions of their own. Here are their suggestions:

- ☐ effectively functioning parent groups to discuss common problems
- ☐ workshops to give parents instructions in aiding their children's education at home
- ☐ extension of student assistant program
- ☐ development of plans to continue the Language Arts program when federal funding ends
- ☐ development and acceptance of a structured K-12 reading program
- ☐ a program of voluntary aides
- ☐ school time for coordination of programs between the staffs of all secondary schools and their feeder schools
- ☐ more cultural activities for all students
- ☐ establishment of a type of "free" counselor role in each county school with specific responsibility for maintaining good home/school/community contacts
- ☐ extension of speed reading course
- ☐ a variety of teaching techniques which would permit more student involvement and allow more student independence
- ☐ extension of Book Feast
- ☐ more complete records of student progress with emphasis on pre- and post-tests in all skill and academic areas
- ☐ informal meetings to acquaint teachers with community, social, legal, and government groups which could offer services to the school if contacts are made and maintained
- ☐ discovery of a means to give students enough self-esteem to want to overcome slow starts and to keep learning
- ☐ discovery of a means to make students secure enough within themselves and to be tolerant and accepting of others and their ideas
- ☐ greater emphasis on career development related to skills and training to match those skills
- ☐ opportunities for students to broaden their personal horizons so that life offers both a chance and a choice

The quotation used as a theme for this booklet reminds us that dreams can become the realities of tomorrow. However, the realities of existence daily remind us that the fulfillment of dreams does not just happen.

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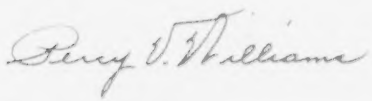
Tomorrow is Today's Dream

The Title III project, Project CHILD, has operated for a year. Because our approach is open-minded, we are learning many things about what works well and what does not. Real progress is slow for it must be based on continuing critical examination in order to avoid the pitfalls of solutions that are only temporary and superficial.

In his introductory letter Dr. Sensenbaugh made a statement which, in closing, I shall repeat: "Improving public education in Charles County is the concern of all of us." I join him in his wish that this booklet will be an encouraging progress report.

Sincerely,



Percy V. Williams
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Compensatory, Urban,
and Supplementary Programs

Additional counseling staff provide additional services for students, for parents, and for the community. Now counselors are more occupied with children than with paperwork. Special attention is being given to the development of self-esteem in students. Quiet informal conversations between staff and students and staff and parents are becoming more the rule than the exception. Bel Alton children are trying to match the huge footprints left by their young teacher-idol, Eric Slifko, who was victim of a fatal accident. They recall his warm spirit and are helping to plan the camp being built in his memory.

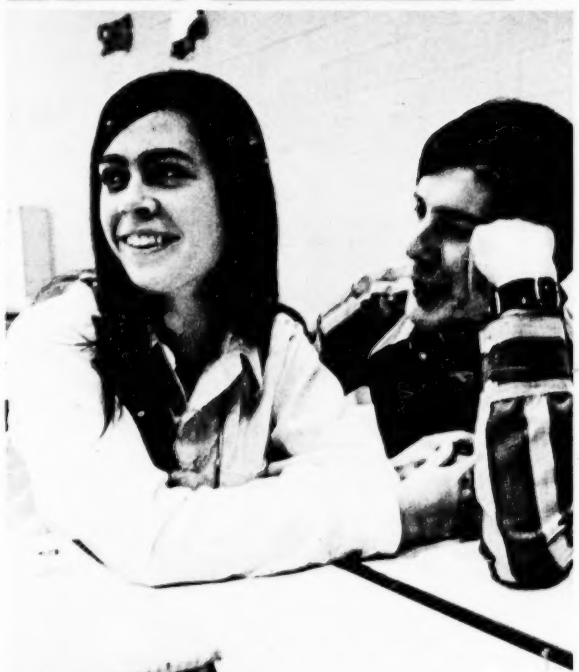
Special Education

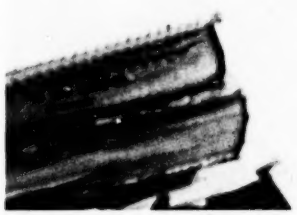
Bel Alton School formerly had all their special education children in self-contained classrooms for the entire day. These classes no longer exist. Special education students now follow a schedule similar to that of other students. Each day they meet with one of three resource teachers who prescribes individual activities and gives individual attention.

A guidance counselor reports that stigmas are being eradicated and that the children are actually requesting to go to the resource rooms. These rooms have become familiar places where a maximum of six students can meet comfortably and informally with teachers who know them well and who really care about their future both in school and out of school.

The attention being given special education students is a needed reminder of the importance to diagnose accurately the real learning problems whether they be vision, deafness, or other disabilities. A different I.Q. test is now being given to special education students. Results indicate that many of the children should be classified as culturally deprived rather than mentally retarded.

Encouraging things are happening. Even though they may be small, they still hadn't occurred before. Eleven year-olds who had not learned to spell their own names have been taught their names, addresses, parents' names, birthdays, days of the week, and other communication skills useful to them. . . . A fourth grader





who seldom attempted to verbalize in class volunteers to "make a sentence now." . . . A fifth grade boy is learning to write his first initial, a task formerly too difficult for him because of poor eye-hand motor co-ordination. . . . A cluster of children avidly discussed an impressive part of their recent trip to the Capitol in Washington — the pigeons!

Children once outside the mainstream of school life are receiving individual help in order to stay in the mainstream. The problems to be overcome are many. Perhaps the most important thing is that a beginning is really being made.

John Hopkins

Community Involvement in Project CHILD

Involving the community is another element in improving and broadening education.

- ☐ Bel Alton and La Plata parents are becoming more accustomed to visiting the schools for informal chats with the staff. And they like the idea of concerned counselors leaving the school to work in the community.
- ☐ When the Book Feast was planned for La Plata High School, the Greater Waldorf Jaycees and interested parents assisted in obtaining donations of over 1,500 books for the students to borrow without restriction.
- ☐ During the Christmas season, a large group of Bel Alton parents gathered to learn to make decorations for their homes and to get to know one another.
- ☐ La Plata High School students participated in projects such as the March of Dimes and the Heart Fund. The school's contribution to the Heart Fund quadrupled over the previous year's amount.

Enthusiastic responses have greeted such community-school activities as the pre-reading lessons for parents, planning sessions for cultural experiences for students, and the establishment of the Eric Slifko Camp Memorial Fund. One of the main goals of the "free" counselors is liaison with the community. They have visited every agency that might be concerned with students and have updated school files on the services available from each agency. They have visited community clubs and social organizations to explore the possibilities for cooperative projects. The exchanges of information about Project CHILD and the promises of support have been mutually encouraging.

The Department of Social Services and the Juvenile Authorities soon recognized the value of the "free" counselors' role in helping to place students in foster homes and in maintaining closer observation of students on probation. Churches and random discussion groups discovered that the "free" counselors could bridge the adult-student gaps when meetings centered on schools or the problems of youth.

The levels of involvement are changing. The community and the schools are beginning to think and act in unison. Students view their futures in the community more realistically. And parents are being "liberated." They have the opportunity to request that their child take a proficiency test to change reading levels. They are learning to ask "why" when they do not understand. They recognize with certainty that being the parent of a student means more than signing a report card each grading period.